

**Message**  
**USAID Mission Director Gloria Steele**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Albay Health Fest**  
**Albay Astrodome, Legazpi City, Albay**  
**August 12, 2010**

Governor Joey Salceda,

Vice-Governor Harold Imperial,

municipal mayors,

members of the provincial and municipal legislative councils,

members of the USAID family and partners,

friends, ladies and gentlemen,

*Marhay na aga saindu gabos. (Good morning everyone in Bicolano)*

On behalf of the U.S. Government, I would like to congratulate the provincial government of Albay for once again taking the lead in health advocacy and inspiring other local governments through the *Albay Health Fest*. I am awed not just by the majestic *Daragang Magayon* but also by the passion of Albayanos to rise above every challenge.

Let me also take this opportunity to commend the outstanding leadership of Governor Joey Salceda in making health one of the priority programs of his administration and for his unwavering commitment to implement the

provincial health investment plan. His untiring support to health programs and interventions implemented in the province is truly worth emulating and USAID is proud to be a partner in this effort.

I believe that how local governments invest the people's money is the key to good governance and improved economic and social welfare. And I am happy to see that the provincial leadership of Albay believes that investing in health is investing in human capital. For example, the 34 million pesos the province allocates annually for PhilHealth enrolment of indigents is laudable. By being healthy, you Albayanos can ensure that your province will continue to be the economic hub of the entire Bicol region.

We must remember though that health governance does not rest solely on the provincial government. All local officials, down to the village or *barangay* level must take part in ensuring that the province's health goals become a reality.

The implementation of Albay's Provincial Investment Plan for Health could not be possible without the support of all sectors of our society. The private sector, the academe, the transport sector, other government agencies,

students, NGOs, health workers, community groups, etc. must actively participate in this endeavor. Every Albayano should own and embrace this vision. Government cannot do it alone -- *magtarabangan kita (let us help each other)*.

I need not underscore the private sector's pivotal role in enhancing people's access to quality family planning and maternal and child health services in workplaces and in communities. With the growing awareness and appreciation of the private sector's stake in health and the Governor's interest to work with the private sector, I believe that the province of Albay can successfully model public-private partnerships and collaborations in health.

The Albay Health Fest is indeed one fertile ground for local governments to showcase creative and innovative practices on health. I would like to acknowledge the many dedicated health workers who continue to rise up to the challenge of improving the health status of their constituents. I would also like to commend all local officials for their continued support to the health sector. Let's all give them a big round of applause.

At this point, I would like to challenge other local officials, local government units, and members of the local community present here today to take the first step in replicating the initiatives that will be shared today in their respective areas. The challenge of discovering and engaging innovative health strategies and interventions does not stop here. It has just begun.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to affirm the U.S. Government's continuing support to the Province of Albay and to the rest of the Bicol region.

Again to everyone gathered here today, good day and *Diyos Mabalos!*

*(thank you)*